

[Marine Local]

Arnold Manoff Beliefs and Customs - Folk Stuff 16 MARINE LOCAL John Winocur: Everyone in this racket in a crackpot. We don't mind it. We're used to being called crackpots. We're all waiting for the day when we can get out. There was one guy who had a scheme for a cooperative chicken farm. He had it worked out down to the last detail. It was twelve pages long, a scheme whereby the boys on the beach wouldn't have to stay hungry. He elaborated it as far as he possibly could, down to the last detail. One guy had a scheme for raising bullfrogs to sell for frog's legs. The majority of the men want to buy a little home in the country and a chicken farm. I know some boys who used to save a stake and go prospecting for gold on the West Coast.

Listen here's a true story that could only at sea. Can you picture a situation when two men know each other intimately personally and yet never met. Unbelievable? It happened. I was one of the men.

This is how it happened. Operators are always talking to each other, you know, a littler personal stuff. Well, there was something about the conversation and replies of this man that was better than the ordinary. Instead of oh yeah and so what he might say really or something like that. He had wit. Well the first time I had a conversation with him I knew I struck oil. We never ran together in one port but I got to know him as intimately as two men could know each other. When I got on the beach he offered to lend me money. I offered to lend him money and yet we never met. We wrote letters to each other. I have one of them around. I'll bring it down next time. His name was Anthony Masello and his home was in Lawrence, Mass. He died of fever in the tropics. When I got into port I went to visit his family because I was curious to find out what kind of background he came from. They were nice people. I offered to give them the money he had loaned me but they refused to take it. 2 I told the story once to a writer and he wrote it up. Of course, he changed it around. He put in a situation where the one man has an unconscious

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homosexual urge for the other man. Psychological stuff. And then it ends with one of the men sending the other an S.O.S. but by the time the other man arrives it is too late and the ship has gone down. What do you think of that? It was published in some magazine I forget the name.

Every man handles a key which is characteristic like the way you recognize a man's voice by the timbre of it. You can tell who the man is by the way he accents his dots and dashes.

The most miserable eight days I ever spent in my life was on a fishing boat. The physical discomfort! I had to open the door to take my pants off and I slept with the pillow over the receiver and the tail end of the mattress right over the stop gaps. And my ship mate! A bunch of blue noses. Their personal habits! [q?] Two hours out I got a whiff of one of their pipes. I think it was Five Brothers tobacco. And their eating habits! They never bathe except to wash the fish scales off their arms once in a while. It was one of the most miserable eight days I ever spent. But I made some dough. Regular salary and a share in the catch. That was the only reason an operator would take a fishing boat. Not these days of course. He'll take anything he can get. My shipmates? Half of the time you can't understand them; they talk a brogue. The other half of the time they talk about fish. Then they always tell the same story how the great big liner always gets out of the way of the fishing boat. Oh yeah.

Once on a passenger ship an old lady about sixty years old comes into the wireless room and she hands me a message. Well, I start counting the words to find out how much to charge her. When she sees me bending over the message she says, "Young man are you reading my messages? Let me have it. I didn't know you had to read it and she takes it and walks out."